

Consideration of the dedication of the Loblolly Marsh Nature Preserve in Jay County

The proposed Nature Preserve is a 440.1 acre located near Bryant in Jay County. This preserve protects former floodplains that connect to the Wabash River, an associated wetland complex, prairie communities, mature woodland and restored forest land. This area originally was floodplain forest and marshland, and was drained by a steam powered dredge during the period 1888 to 1910. During these years of drainage, Gene Stratton-Porter wrote most of her most successful novels and nature studies about the Limberlost area. The Loblolly Marsh was the heart of the Limberlost. Once the wetlands were converted to farmland, the area was cropped from 1910 until restoration began in 1992. During this period of agriculture, crop losses from periodic flooding plagued the landowners almost yearly. But the biggest losses were the many species of plants and animals documented in Porter's books.

Starting in 1992, the Friends of the Limberlost, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Natural resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have worked with landowners who enrolled their lands into the Wetland reserve Program, restoring their farmland into wetlands. The Loblolly Marsh is one of the largest and most successful wetland restorations in Indiana, as the partners work together to bring back the wetlands so eloquently described in Gene Stratton Porter's writings.

This Nature Preserve consists of topography that is a wetland complex containing emergent bur reed and cattail marshes, which serve as excellent waterfowl reproduction areas. During drier times of the year, the marsh may have large mudflats exposed and shorebirds visit the area. Fall months are primed for the many migrating birds that feed on the abundant growth of annual plants. Winter months are a flurry of activity with all of the northern migrants and an occasional snowy owl. In the spring, small potholes serve as mating areas for several species of amphibians. Sedge meadows and wet meadows are deafening with the calls of several frog species including northern leopard frogs. The woodland has a wide array of plants and the colors begin early. Waterfowl find nesting sites in the prior year's growth of tall grass prairie. In late summer and early fall, the prairies explode with native plants that show off their flowers throughout the area.

Noteworthy animal species found in this Nature Preserve include two species of State Special Concern, Northern Leopard frog, and the Least Weasel. Also, five State Endangered bird species, American Bittern, Least Bittern, Sedge Wren, Black Crowned Night Heron, and the Northern Harrier. The nesting call of the Sandhill Crane was documented, also a species of State Special Concern.

Noteworthy plant species is *Carex timida*, a State Endangered species.

This tract is owned and managed by the Department of Natural Resources and the Division of Nature Preserves.

The Division of Nature Preserves recommends dedication of this site as a State Nature Preserve.

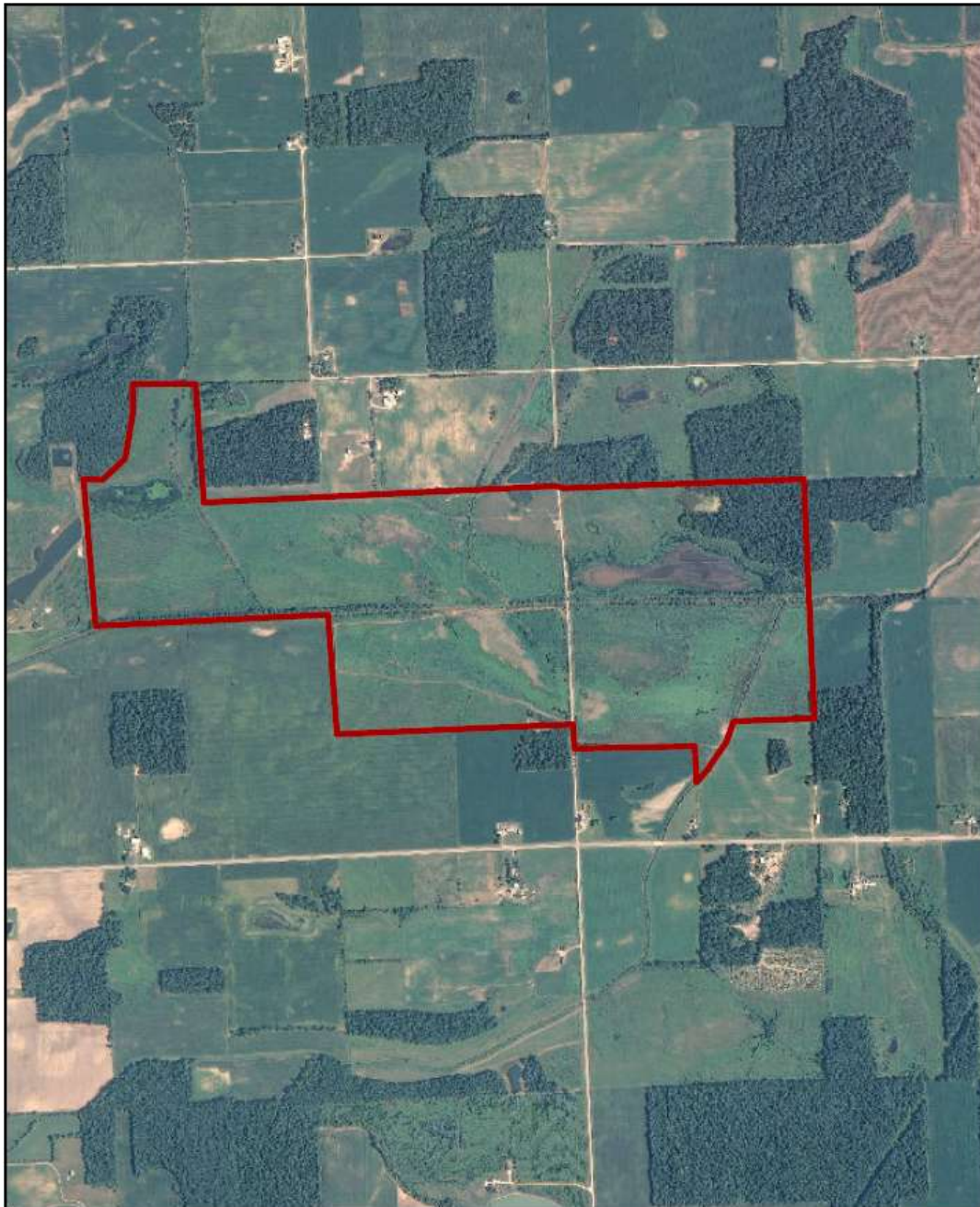
Attached is Nature Preserves Exhibit A.

Loblolly Marsh Nature Preserve

Exhibit A

County: Jay
Size: 440.1 acres

USGS Map: 7.5 Quad Domestic
Ownership: Nature Preserves



map created by R Wilson IDNR Nature Preserves 01.31.2012

